1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER IV

VALUES

a. Good company

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ONE of the values most constantly stressed by the Nyakyusa is that of *ukwangala* which, in its primary sense, means 'the enjoyment of good company' and, by extension, the mutual aid and sympathy which spring from personal friendship. It implies urbane manners and a friendliness which expresses itself in eating and drinking together; not only merry conversation, but also discussion between equals, which the Nyakyusa regard as the principal form of education. 'It is by conversing with our friends', said one of our witnesses, 'that we gain wisdom (*amakala*); it is bad to sit quite still in men's company. A man who does this is a fool; he learns no wisdom, he has only his own thoughts. Moreover, a man who does not spend time with other people is always dirty, he does not compare himself with any friends. For we learn cleanliness of body in company, those who are dirty learning from their more cleanly friends. Again, if a man is accused of some crime and brought before the chief and is unable to defend himself easily and with eloquence we mock at him and say: "What is the matter with you? Do you live all by yourself? How is it that you are so foolish?" Wisdom and cleanliness are the two great things to be learnt in company. It is bad to live alone far from other people, such a man learns nothing: he never learns to express himself well, to converse wittily with friends, or to argue a case with eloquence. It is better to live with other people.'

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'To live with other people', says our informant, but he implies 'to live with contemporaries'. For *ukwangala*, in the sense of discussion and easy give-and-take, can never occur between men and women, and is made difficult between men of different generations by the respect required of sons for their fathers. Since men are held to acquire manners, eloquence, and wisdom only in company it is necessary, the Nyakyusa argue, that they should build in villages, rather than in scattered homesteads, and since

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week. He has, then, no reason for doing any more work. Work has yielded him all that he requires, and he may lie in the sun and chat lazily, or move about strumming his *pango* (stringed instrument) with that supreme unconsciousness of being an idler, which is to some so irritating, to others so charming, a characteristic of the African.

All this, however, is ideal, and seldom corresponds to the actual fact. The year may have been a bad one; ill-health may have overtaken himself or his family; his cattle may be dying; or he may have failed to find employment after long trekking in search of it, and consequently his tax is unpaid and trouble is hanging over him. But a normal year, neither unusually prosperous nor unusually disastrous, will reveal how the Konde fill in their time. Let it be understood that they see nothing but folly in working for what they do not want. Working for what other people want is a high form of altruism to which only a small number of Konde have risen. That work increases the wealth of the country is a doctrine of high economics which they do not understand. *Wealth is increased by good harvests and by* increase of live-stock.

The whole life of the community centres round the hoeing season. During the great heat which usually precedes the rains, the people move languidly about, incapable of anything like exertion. The men gather in groups and lie idly in the shade, talking languidly, drowsingly; an illness or a death; a

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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461 marriage settlement; the wealth some one has
•521 brought from the South; or perhaps they exchange
522 impressions of Europeans they have worked for—a subject into which a great deal of humour can be packed; for it must not be imagined that the white man is taken too seriously. His little foibles, his often none too good temper, his haste to get a job done, and above all his cool assumption of unquestioned superiority, supply endless fun to the village joker. "Bantu as she is spoke" by some Europeans gladdens the weary hours for many a humorously inclined native.

241 Should the rains be late, the situation may be
572 serious, for not only does the heat continue, but the harvest will be correspondingly late, and there is dark fear lest the supplies in the barns, intended to last until March, should have to do until April is well on.
[783] Public prayer is offered, led by the chief. The preliminary ceremonies have been attended to, and as soon as the first rains fall all sally out with the first streak of dawn to begin the year's work. From a score of small crofts one may hear the long happy shout of the men, and the shrill call of the women, as they toil in the early morning; but as the day advances and the heat increases, the shouting dies away, and every one puts the last ounce of energy into the task in hand. Henceforward, for about three months, the native gives all his attention to his crops; for as the season advances, and the grain begins to grow, the weeds come up also in wild profusion, and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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eaters. The loud smacking of many pairs of lips round the camp fire makes a quite surprising noise; to which is added, especially if there is *nyama* (flesh), a sustained conversation carried on in a loud voice, making a din which is only ended by an angry shout from the European, who has himself long ago finished his repast, and cannot sleep in the uproar of the feast.

If their table manners in this respect leave much to be desired, in others they are beyond reproach. They carefully wash their hands before, and their mouths after eating. For the hand, the right hand, which is the "eating" hand, is almost their only implement; but I have often watched my carriers make spoons of folded leaves, with which they neatly scooped up the cooked maize, or whatever else they were eating; and I have myself frequently drunk water scooped from a passing stream with a similarly folded leaf.

The one great meal a day is a mighty feast, and one's girth is considerably increased when it is over. Little children literally protrude in front, and their entire nakedness makes the protrusion very obvious. But while the Konde look forward to the evening meal as the event of the day, the practice of eating twice, or even thrice, is growing; and I have never known anyone being averse from eating, and that heartily, at any hour of the twenty-four. Eating by families is unknown, would indeed be bad manners, for the men eat first, and the women only after their lords are satisfied. A few Christian families are beginning to